

ACT III] BEING EARNEST
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whole world. And I don't care
twopence about social
possibilities.

Lady Bracknell. Never speak disrespectfully of
Society, Algernon.
Only people who can't get into it do that. *[To Cecily]*
Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has
nothing but his
debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of
mercenary
marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had
no fortune
of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment
of allowing
that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must
give my
consent.

Algernon. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. Cecily, you may kiss me!

Cecily. *[Kisses her.]* Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. You may also address me as Aunt
Augusta for
the future.

Cecily. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. The marriage, I think, had better
take place
quite soon.

Algernon. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Cecily. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. To speak frankly, I am not in
favour of long
engagements. They give people the opportunity
of finding
out each other's character before marriage,
which I think is
never advisable.

Jack. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady
Bracknell,
but this engagement is quite out of the
question. I am
Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry
without my
consent until she comes of age. That consent I
absolutely
decline to give.

Lady Bracknell. Upon what grounds may I ask?
Algernon
is
an extremely, I may almost say, an
ostentatiously, eligible
young man. He has nothing, but he looks
everything.

What more can one desire?

Jack. It pains me very much to have to speak
frankly to you,
Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the
fact is that I
do not approve at all of his moral character. I
suspect him
of being untruthful.

*[Algernon and Cecily look at him in indignant
amazement.]*

Lady Bracknell. Untruthful? My nephew Algernon?
Impossible!

He is an Oxonian.

Jack. I fear there can be no possible doubt about
the matter.
This afternoon during my temporary absence in
London on
an important question of romance, he
obtained admission